

# BREAKING GROUND

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



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Cover photo and photos on pages 3 and 9 by Lynette Swinford



TENNESSEE ALLIANCE FOR FULL PARTICIPATION TEAM

## CONTACT INFORMATION



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## A HOME FOR HUGH MCCLEARY by Ned Andrew Solomon

Hugh McCleary is feeling pretty relaxed in his new home. He's got cable TV, two telephones, central air conditioning, beautiful wood floors, washer and dryer units and several pieces of furniture—including a living room set and several chairs donated by friends—that may or may not be in the same place next week. "If I don't like where something is sitting, I can just move it around in different ways and put them where I want," says Mr. McCleary. "If people don't like it I say, 'Well by golly, it's my house. I'll move it when I get ready!'"

Which is obviously the prerogative of any homeowner. Furniture where you want it. Guests when you want them. Pictures on the wall—or not. But pictures on the wall is something Mr. McCleary has in abundance, including one of himself smiling at three years old. In addition, there are numerous pieces of framed artwork donated by folks in Memphis, through Mr. McCleary's brother and sister-in-law. "She told me next time she comes she's going to bring a carload of pictures," says Mr. McCleary. "I don't know where I'm going to put them all!"

Having more than he needs instead of not enough is a problem that Mr. McCleary hasn't always had. He has traveled a long road to get to this point in his life: living on his own, in his own home, in the new Rainwood Subdivision of Nashville. As an adult with a disability on a very limited income, Mr. McCleary has lived in large institutional settings, group homes and rental apartments.

In 2002, the Down Syndrome Society of Middle Tennessee forged a partnership with The Arc of Davidson County to address the enormous obstacles persons with disabilities face in trying to achieve homeownership, and in safe and affordable neighborhoods. Using a model initiated by Habitat for Humanity, the

HOYO project builds houses by counting on donations and volunteer labor, then offers them for purchase to qualifying individuals with disabilities, at a 0% interest rate, arranged by Pinnacle Financing. That interest rate allows Mr. McCleary to make a monthly mortgage payment that is actually lower than his previous monthly rental fees.

And, similar to the Habitat process, selected HOYO candidates must complete homeownership classes and commit to 200 "sweat equity" hours of labor to the construction process. If the new homeowner cannot accomplish this himself, his family and friends can work on his behalf.

HOYO coordinates the several agencies and individuals that make the house happen, including, in Mr. McCleary's case, site supervision and skilled volunteers from Habitat for Humanity staff, The Arc of Davidson County, Ron Butler from The Arc of TN, New Hope Construction, and Mid-TN Supported Living, Inc., whose staff contributed many of the sweat equity commitment hours.

For the past several years, Mr. McCleary has been assisted in his living circumstances by Mid-TN, which currently works with 21 people in supported living arrangements. "And each one looks really different," says Denine Hunt, former executive director of Mid-TN. "Most of the



folks have a live-in companion, where they share a life and a home with each other. A couple of people—whose needs are very complex or who may engage in dangerous behaviors—have shift staff, which is the only way we know how to support them safely."

And then some get support like Mr. McCleary—those who don't need or don't want 24-hour support. "In fact some will let us know if we are giving them too much support, and stepping on their independence, which is a very powerful thing," says Ms. Hunt. "Hugh will start dodging us if he feels that we're getting a little too nosy, a little too pushy—and we know to listen to that. So we try to be real sensitive to that balance of shared control, and help Hugh make informed decisions. We might not always agree with him, just like we don't always agree with each other's choices all the time."

When funding becomes available, Ms. Hunt and her staff routinely talk to the different folks they support about their interest in having their own homes. Currently, 32% of the people Mid-TN supports are homeowners. "As an agency, we really

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# THE MAYOR’S ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES 24TH ANNUAL RECOGNITION RECEPTION

By Melissa Fortson

The Mayor’s Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities presented awards at its 24th Annual Recognition Reception, held November 29, 2005, at the Adventure Science Center in Nashville.

Awards were given in several categories and recognized individuals, agencies, businesses, and organizations that have made significant contributions to the disability community.

Also recognized were artists whose work was featured in Creative Expressions XI. This annual exhibit, which features work in a variety of mediums by artists with a wide range of ages and abilities, is jointly sponsored by the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and the Mayor’s Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities. The exhibit provides artists with disabilities an audience for their creativity and an opportunity for inclusion in the art community.



MAYOR BILL PURCELL (PHOTO CREDIT: METRO GOV'T OF NASHVILLE, GARY LAYDA)

Speaking on behalf of the Mayor’s Advisory Committee, Chair Brenda Dillon praised the winners, saying, “You are what makes Nashville such a wonderful place to call home.” *Breaking Ground* extends its congratulations to the recognized artists and award recipients, three of whom are profiled below.

BERNIE SHEAHAN

As a recipient of the Media/Communications Award, freelance journalist Bernie Sheahan was recognized for communicating positively the activities and issues related to disability and using “People First” language to create and promote positive images of people with disabilities. In May 2005, the *Nashville Scene* published “A Beautiful Mind’s Uncertain Future,” Ms. Sheahan’s account of her experience of bipolar disorder and the impact of the loss of TennCare coverage on people with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI).



BERNIE SHEAHAN (PHOTO CREDIT: NASHVILLE SCENE)

“I always knew I'd ‘tell my story’; I had to,” says Ms. Sheahan. “Not just for the catharsis, but for the help I knew it could give others who struggle in silence. Mental illness is still a silent killer. We used to

whisper about cancer, and it's hard to imagine that now; we have ribbons and wristbands and all manner of fundraisers. We walk, run, bike and eat to raise awareness and make money to fight cancer. Every celebrity you know will join the cause to fight that disease, and rightly so—cancer seems to touch everyone. But so does mental illness. We just don't talk about it. And it's incurable.

“God bless Liz Garrigan (*Nashville Scene* editor) for giving me that much space and that much freedom. The result was overwhelming; dozens of e-mails and phone calls thanking me and the *Scene* for bringing mental illness into the light. People still tell me how much it meant to them, for themselves or a sister or husband—to understand bipolar disorder or to know someone else shares their struggles. I'm so grateful. I know people who've found hope in my story, and that's the best part of it for me.”

MATTHEW DAVID DRUMRIGHT

Matthew Drumright exhibited five pieces in Creative Expressions XI. A 22-year-old Brentwood native, Mr. Drumright started taking photographs when he was ten and holds two jobs in order to support himself and his photography. A 2005 recipient of VSA Arts of Tennessee’s Professional Artist Award, Mr. Drumright has also displayed his work in the S. Dillon Ripley Center at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C..



MATTHEW DRUMWRIGHT (PHOTO CREDIT: METRO GOV'T OF NASHVILLE, GARY LAYDA)

*Breaking Ground* recently spoke with Mr. Drumright about his artwork.

BG: How do you feel when you see your photographs in an exhibit?

MD: I feel good and proud. I hope my pictures make people smile.

BG: I heard that you decided to follow your dream of becoming a photographer when you were in high school. What do you like about digital photography?

MD: I like to see how the pictures look right away. I don't have to pay so much for film and can take the picture over right away if I don't like how the picture looks.

BG: How do you choose your subjects?

MD: I just take picture of things I like. My family, friends, nature and sports. Sometimes someone will ask me to take a picture of

something special.

BG: Do you have any advice for artists with disabilities?

MD: Don't let people say you can't be an artist. Follow your dreams. Roselyn Carter said, "Have confidence in your abilities and have the strength to follow through." That is me. My parents and family help me and believe in me.

DREW BENNETT

A starter for the Tennessee Titans, wide receiver Drew Bennett was applauded for his efforts off the field. Mr. Bennett devotes his charitable efforts to programs that serve individuals with disabilities and started his own foundation called “The Drew Crew” to encourage others to support these organizations. Mr. Bennett also serves on the board of United Cerebral Palsy of Middle Tennessee. For these efforts, Mr. Bennett was recognized as someone who uses his talents and creativity to promote awareness of disability issues.

“I have seen my brother deal with cerebral palsy and he has been a great source of strength for me. As someone in the spotlight, I have a chance to lend a public voice to those who deal with cerebral palsy and I want to take full advantage of that platform. It obviously means a great deal to me to help in whatever way I can. This award is nice in that it brings more attention to the cause and lets people know that they too can make a difference in the causes that matter to them.”



BRENDA DILLON & DREW BENNETT (PHOTO CREDIT: METRO GOV'T OF NASHVILLE, GARY LAYDA)

2005 AWARD RECIPIENTS

Agency/Organization	Nashville Convention and Visitors’ Bureau
Artist/Performer/Athlete	Drew Bennett
Educator	Mary Ann Armbrister
Employer	Gaylord Opryland Hotel and Convention Center
Entertainment	Regal Cinema Hollywood 27 Tennessee Performing Arts Center
Family	Skye Solomon
Health Care Provider	Adriana Bialostovsky, MD
Legislative Advocate	Gordon Bonnyman
Media/Communications	Joe Dubin – WKRN Bernie Sheahan
Mack West Children’s Award	Grace Walker Goad
Professional Award	Sam Adams Martha Lafferty
Trey Pointer Young Citizen Award	Lericko Scruggs
Volunteers	Jackie Beasley Richard Buck Dennis Campbell Pat Galvin Daniel (“Dany”) Gonzales Gwendolyn A. Pace Joyce Weingartner
Jo Andrews Award	Andrea Cooper

NIGHT SNOWFALL (DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY), MATTHEW DRUMWRIGHT



VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER 2005 RECOGNIZED ARTISTS

- Anne Ambrose
- Laura Brookhart
- Matthew David Drumright
- Grace Walker Goad
- Daniel Hepburn
- Geraldine Kuttab
- Katherine Prats
- Bernadette Resha
- Delsenia Sales
- Thaddaeus N. Tekell

Since 1994, the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center has sponsored exhibits of art by and about people with disabilities in order to demonstrate the diverse talents of individuals with disabilities. For more information on Creative Expressions, or to suggest a future exhibit, contact Elise McMillan at 615-343-2540 or elise.mcmillan@vanderbilt.edu .

# ALLIANCE FOR FULL PARTICIPATION – PERSONAL VIEWPOINTS

*Breaking Ground* previously published an article about the Alliance for Full Participation Summit that included the National Priorities developed at the meeting (Issue XXVII, November 2005, pages 4-5). In this issue, we publish comments from Tennesseans who attended the Summit.

The Alliance for Full Participation Summit was an unprecedented event planned and produced by leading national and state disability organizations. Far exceeding expectations, the Summit drew over 2,300 attendees. Eleven organizations that are leaders in the disability field came together in a first time ever partnership. The organizations represented self-advocates, advocates, state DD agencies, community providers, direct support professionals, state DD councils, protection & advocacy systems, and university centers of excellence for DD, and national DD accreditation agencies. The purpose of the Summit, whose theme was “Many Voices, One Vision,” was to establish a unified disability policy agenda for the next decade that would promote our goal of full participation for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The Summit program was highly rated by participants. Inspirational and thought provoking speakers included Roger Nierenberg, conductor of the Stamford Symphony, and Martin Luther King, III. Breakout sessions revolved around three themes: Leadership, Community Membership and Self-Determination, and Enhancing the Quality of Supports and Services. The Summit concluded with a town hall meeting moderated by CNN correspondent, Frank Sesno. Using an electronic voting system, individuals at the town hall meeting voiced their perspectives on key disability issues.

Central to the success of the Summit was the formation of state teams that were organized prior to the Summit. State teams met and generated state priorities, which were displayed at a poster session during the Summit. Following the Summit, state teams reconvened to plan strategies for addressing priorities on the state level.

The Alliance for Full Participation will be an ongoing movement to promote coalition building among disability organizations nationally and on the state level. It is hoped that another national summit will occur several years from now. In the meantime, state teams continue working on local strategies to promote full participation and the national organizers continue to meet to support the work of state teams.

*For more information contact Wanda Willis, Tennessee state team leader, at wanda.willis@state.tn.us or 615-253-5369.*

The Alliance for Full Participation was an amazing two days. People came together to share their experiences and lend their voices. With so many different groups coming together to have their own

annual meetings there was still the air of collaboration and a willingness to learn from each other.

The event that spoke to me the most was the...Town Hall Meeting. Attendees were provided hand-held remote voting devices and then a survey was taken in which everyone got to vote. It wasn't the voting that got my attention, however, but that there was not a single question that everyone answered exactly the same. Even the questions that you would think would be a resounding 100% 'yes' showed much diversity in thinking. What this says to me is that there is no one way to approach any issue and that what works for one doesn't necessarily work for all. This is an important truth that professionals and advocates have to keep in mind.

The Alliance for Full Participation embodied this truth. There was so much energy and synergy created at the conference. For Tennessee to be a "Full Participation state" we (everyone) have to remember that it's the full participation of all people, not just this group or those class members, but all people need to participate in developing policies, attitudes, education, and training.

*-ELIZABETH BISHOP, COMMUNITY EDUCATION DIRECTOR/DISSEMINATION COORDINATOR, BOLING CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, MEMPHIS*

The Summit was an insightful experience for me as a family member and as a professional. It was the Town Hall Meeting I found to be the most thought provoking, not only during the meeting, but also today as I continue to examine the implications of the participants' responses. The town hall questions were exceptionally thoughtful, well written and the voting technology was incredible. However, the diversity of our answers continues to be thought provoking. While we are all connected to the disability field, the variety of responses reflects the need for continued communication and exploration of the meaning of One Vision.

*-RUTH J. ROBERTS, EDD, INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING COORDINATOR, BOLING CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, MEMPHIS*

It's been three decades since the first round of legislation that addressed the discrimination against individuals with disabilities, and here we were - finally getting together and listening to each other, on a grand, over the top scale. People gathered to see if we could hear a message with one heart, one mind. Many voices, one vision is a difficult goal to achieve. Listening carefully to the many voices, the diversity of those usually lumped together as "people with disabilities" was remarkable. There were caucuses that met on various topics and there were meetings of national organizations celebrating their own achievements and hoping to be able to come to consensus with other organizations with slightly differing interests. We met, we discussed, we laughed, we planned. And the final outcome statement that was released is our "party platform" for the next decade. Maybe the promise of the laws passed so long ago now, will come further into being - into the consciousness of

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# DISABILITY DATA FOR THE FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM BY WILLIAM EDINGTON

Title 33, which contains Tennessee’s mental health and developmental disabilities laws, establishes eligibility criteria for the Family Support program administered by the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS) and provided by community agencies in every Tennessee county. Title 33 states that the primary focus of the Family Support program is supporting:

- Families with children with severe or developmental disabilities, school age and younger;
- Adults with severe or developmental disabilities who choose to live with their families; and
- Adults with severe or developmental disabilities who are residing in the community in an unsupported setting (not a State or federally funded program).

Title 33’s definitions of severe disability and developmental disability permit the DMRS Family Support program to provide services to persons with mental retardation, developmental disabilities other than mental retardation, and also to persons who are functionally similar to persons with

a developmental disability but whose disability occurred after age 22.

In the Spring of 2005, the State Family Support Council approved changes in the quarterly report forms for the program that facilitate an easier determination of the number of persons in the program who have mental retardation, a developmental disability other than mental retardation, or a disability that occurred after age 22. These reporting changes went into effect on July 1, 2005.

A summary of the disability data for the first quarter of FY 05-06, encompassing July through September 2005, is provided below in chart form. Review of the data indicates that the majority of persons served by the program (47.9%) had a developmental disability other than mental retardation. The disability group receiving the second highest level of services was persons with disabilities that occurred after age 22 (30.9%). Data from the same period show that the disability group with the greatest number of persons on the waiting list for Family Support are those with a disability that

occurred after age 22 (46.2%) while persons with developmental disabilities other than mental retardation (36.3%) were the second most common.

This breakdown is significant, since the Family Support program is one of the few programs in the State that provides funding to those with developmental disabilities other than mental retardation and to individuals whose disabilities occurred after age 22. Persons with mental retardation were the group with the smallest number served (21.2%) as well as having the fewest on the waiting list (17.5%).

We appreciate the Family Support program and commend the community providers for their outreach efforts to diverse groups of Tennesseans with disabilities.

*William Edington is legislative and public policy coordinator for the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities.*

COMPILATION OF DATA  
DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES - FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM  
1ST QUARTER FY 2005-6

	PERSONS CURRENTLY RECEIVING FAMILY SUPPORT		PERSONS ON FAMILY SUPPORT WAITING LIST	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
MENTAL RETARDATION	651	21.2%	862	17.5%
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY (OTHER THAN MENTAL RETARDATION)	1469	47.9%	1790	36.3%
DISABILITY (OCCURRED AFTER AGE 22)	949	30.9%	2274	46.2%
TOTAL	3069	100.0%	4926	100.0%



# PEOPLE TALKING TO PEOPLE, PEOPLE TAKING PRIDE

## By Holly Rosσμαier

Do you get to eat when you want to? Do you have control over who comes into your room? Do you get to go see your friends when you feel like it?

These are simple questions—questions many of us would never think would be important to ask because the obvious answer is “yes”. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) thought that perhaps the answers to such questions weren’t always “yes”, and, through a New Freedom Initiative Real Choice Systems Change Grant, sought to find out. The Department of Finance and Administration, Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS) awarded a statewide grant to The Arc of Tennessee to administer CMS Satisfaction Surveys to persons with developmental disabilities who receive State services. That grant is called People Talking to People (PTP).

PTP employees venture out into their communities in pairs, typically one per-

son with a disability and one family member of someone with a disability. Ten of these partnerships conduct the Satisfaction Surveys in their own regions. Through these surveys, the State gets a good indication of who is supporting persons with developmental disabilities to the best of their ability, and where improvements could be made. These surveys are to monitor State protocols and processes, not individual agencies or persons. The findings are compiled into reports over a three-year period, which will ultimately result in systems change based on the answers. Surveys are given randomly to both family members and persons receiving supports through DMRS.

**UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES**  
Although the primary purpose of the grant is to gather information and help create positive changes in the support of people with disabilities, other important outcomes are being realized. One outcome is the bond that partners tend to create with one another in their working environment. PTP employs people with a

wide range of disabilities, including traumatic brain injuries, autism, cerebral palsy and other physical and learning disabilities.

Some family members are paired with a person with a disability they’ve never met, while others have been paired with their own adult children. What we’ve noticed is the incredible concern these partners have for one another. Their bond frequently extends past the boundaries of a working environment, and many family members have transitioned effortlessly into the role of advocates for their partners when the need arises.

Lora McClerkin, an interviewer in the northwest part of the State, is a prime example of a person experiencing a meaningful connection with her partner. “This job created for me more than just an income, it put me back in tune with the part of life that is really important, and that’s the ability to think of others before yourself,” says Ms. McClerkin. “This was something I think I was lacking. This job has brought my patience back

and it has taught me that you can do what you set your mind to. I watch my partner (Patrick Sanders) as he struggled to work and the sheer excitement on his face. He has grown so much right before my eyes. He has developed such skills in order to conduct himself in a professional manner and is always looking for ways to improve. I told my husband that one day I want to be like him—always open and willing to learn.”

This observation demonstrates another way PTP is serving the community. By providing employment to people with

disabilities who may otherwise not be employed, PTP provides job skills and training that may be required in future jobs. Skills like using the Internet, Excel, Word, email, fax machines, and speaking confidently with new people can be an opening into many types of positions in the workplace.

In upper East Tennessee, Carol Smith sees this job as a springboard into much bigger and better things. “Ever since I was nine years old, I watched Barbara Walters,” says Ms. Smith. “I always said one day I would have a job like hers. I never dreamed my first job would be interviewing people! I’m working very hard doing my interviews because now I have a dream of one day interviewing Barbara Walters.”

The goal of this grant is to ensure that choice and dignity are being respected within the different supported living situations and funding opportunities for people with disabilities. PTP hopes to shine some light on what seems to be working well, and what could be improved. People being interviewed are more likely to be honest in their responses if they feel comfortable with the person asking the questions. PTP staff don’t show up in suits and ties ready to intimidate the interviewee. Rather, they allow people just like themselves to speak of their concerns and their successes.

“There is so much talent hidden away,” says Mary Turner, an interviewer for the Johnson City area. “I get to hear people sing songs, play the piano, recite the ABC’s backwards, look at crafts they made, look at the trophies they won and look at pictures of their loved ones. I hope this grant continues on. We need to continue to get out and talk to the people and families—check out their needs, concerns and rights. I hope to continue doing this job for a long time.”

*Holly Rosσμαier is project assistant for the People Talking to People Project at The Arc of Tennessee.*



PEOPLE TO PEOPLE TEAMS AND ARC OF TENNESSEE STAFF.

# COUNCIL WELCOMES INTERN!

## By Wanda Willis, Executive Director

On January 4, 2006, Ashley Ferrell joined the Council staff as Public Policy Intern. Ashley is a senior at Auburn University and will be in the intern position through the end of May 2006.

Ashley is a Nashville native and a graduate of Franklin Road Academy. She will graduate from Auburn in May with a degree in Rehabilitation Services. While at Auburn, she served as President of the Rehab Club. Ashley’s brother, Will Ferrell, is a graduate of the Council Youth Leadership Forum for Tennessee high school students, and her mother, Candie Ferrell, is a graduate of the Council’s Partners in Policymaking™ Leadership Institute.

During her tenure with the Council, Ashley will be in charge of several policy and practice research initiatives, assist in covering state and federal legislation, research and write articles for the Council newsletter, *Breaking Ground*, and will assist with the Council Leadership Institutes. Additional areas of interest for Miss Ferrell include advocacy and assistive technology.

“After talking to the Council about the possibility of my internship being here, I decided that it would be a great experience,” says Ashley. “Not only is it a fun atmosphere to work, but I learn new things every single day!”

We are extremely proud and fortunate to have Ashley Ferrell on the Council staff. She represents the next generation of disability policy leaders that many of us have been discussing in forums such as the 2005 Alliance for Full Participation Summit last September in Washington, D.C. It is an important role for us to fill in finding and supporting new talent in our field, and in exposing our organizations and ourselves to new ideas and creative thinking.



WANDA WILLIS (LEFT) WITH ASHLEY FERRELL

# COMPREHENSIVE BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT – A NEW MODEL

By Stephanie Newton

Many children and adults have behavior challenges that interfere with typical development or functioning. It is estimated that 15% of U.S. children and adolescents with developmental disabilities have behavior issues that put them at risk for institutionalization, and fewer than one in five receives adequate treatment.

The Vanderbilt Kennedy Behavioral Analysis Clinic provides comprehensive health, educational, and behavioral assessments to identify causes of behavior difficulties and to develop person-centered interventions. The Clinic—located at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Family Outreach Center, 1810 Edgehill Avenue in Nashville—serves people with developmental disabilities. When it opened in the Fall of 2003, the Clinic began by serving adults with developmental disabilities referred by the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS). The Clinic has recently expanded to include services for children and adolescents.

COMMUNITY INCLUSION PROJECT

The Community Inclusion Project (CIP) is one part of the Clinic’s services for adults. The Project is a collaboration among the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, and the Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services. The aim of CIP is to provide coordinated care in the areas of primary health care, psychiatry, and behavior analysis for adults with dual diagnosis. Dual diagnosis involves having both an intellectual disability and a psychiatric diagnosis.



CRAIG KENNEDY, NEALETTA HOUCHINS-JUAREZ, MICHAEL MAY

“Because health concerns, psychiatric needs, and behavioral issues all interact with each other, this type of care coordination is essential” for a persons success in the community, says Craig Kennedy, Ph.D., professor of special education and director of the Behavioral Analysis Clinic. “The Community Inclusion Project, with the type of care coordination it provides, is the only project in the U.S. of its nature and may serve as a model for other states to adopt.”

Most CIP participants are currently living at the Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute, where they are identified for CIP services. CIP is serving 40 individuals, with equal numbers of men and women, aged 18 to 73 years. While individuals are still at the Institute, CIP conducts the following assessments through the Behavioral Analysis Clinic:

- Primary health care (identifying medical conditions that, untreated, may contribute to behavioral problems: for example, gastroesophageal reflux disease, constipation, high blood pressure, sleep problems, asthma, diabetes);
- Psychiatric care (assessing the need for psychotropic medications, for example,

Prozac); and

- Behavior analysis (assessing the environmental and social causes of behavior difficulties).

This interdisciplinary assessment information is integrated into a comprehensive support plan. Before the individual is discharged into the community, CIP staff train all service providers (residential providers and social workers) to implement the support plan. Afterwards, CIP staff follow each individual on a weekly basis to make sure primary care, psychiatric and behavioral services are being implemented effectively, and the person with a dual diagnosis is benefiting. This work occurs both in the person’s home, and at the Behavioral Analysis Clinic. As people become better integrated, the intensity of the interventions is reduced until the person is receiving an individually tailored set of interventions at the level necessary to sustain success in the community.

TREATMENT PLANS

By coordinating care, CIP is able to balance and integrate the three important areas of intervention. Typically, these services are provided independent of each other. For example, the prescription of a psychotropic medication might occur because a person is repeatedly talking about hurting himself or someone else (the psychiatric component). Prescription of a medication may also cause a health care problem, such as constipation (primary health care). The resulting pain may cause behavioral issues (the behavior analysis component). By coordinating all three elements, CIP staff can monitor and adjust interventions at all three levels so that they complement each other, rather

than work against each other.

To date, individuals entering the Project have been receiving an average of nine different psychotropic medications. “By contrast, individuals who have been with the Community Inclusion Project for less than one year average two psychotropic medications,” Dr. Kennedy says. “The reduction in medication, along with saving thousands of dollars per year in medication costs, decreases health problems from medication side effects, and coincides with improved quality of life in terms of increased employment, community participation, and friendships.”

Dr. Kennedy hopes that as the program progresses, individuals who are treated at the Clinic will engage in paid employment and community life, experience friendships, have family contact, be cognitively aware, have mood improvements, and will self-report that they feel happy.

“Dual diagnosis and severe behavior challenges are chronic conditions that may last a lifetime, once they occur,” says Dr. Kennedy. “We are committed to working with these individuals for as long as their behavioral, psychiatric, and/or health care needs exist.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Vanderbilt Kennedy Behavior Analysis Clinic is a joint venture among the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, Department of Psychiatry, and School of Nursing. It also serves as a training site in behavior analysis for students at Vanderbilt’s Peabody College. For Adult Services, contact (615) 322-8285 or bac@vanderbilt.edu; for Child and Adolescent Services, contact (615) 322-9007 or n.houchins-juarez@vanderbilt.edu. Scholarships based on financial need are available for children and youth treated at the Behavior Analysis Clinic.

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our country. If we can stay on message with one voice, we may have a chance!

-LAUREL RYAN, MFA, FAMILY SUPPORT COORDINATOR, BOLING CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, MEMPHIS

It was the chance of a lifetime to be in the midst of so many people. I hope they were all in our corner. When I say our, I mean “My People”. And who are My People? You are! If you’re reading this, you have an interest in my well-being, hopefully.

The two-day event met all of my expectations, for the most part. I had a chance to interact with the bureaucrats who make major decisions for my life style. I hope that

everyone gained a real perspective on how we want to live.

The highlight of the Summit was the Town Hall Meeting.

-GATHA N. LOGAN JR., TENNESSEE REPRESENTATIVE TO SELF-ADVOCATES BECOMING EMPOWERED, CHATTANOOGA

The AFP occurred during a time when many of us were distracted by the recent hurricanes. Despite such challenges and almost inevitable accessibility problems, about 2400 individuals, including hundreds with disabilities, gathered to express their dream for a future of full community participation of all Americans. Even after 30 years of working

with and for people with disabilities, I had not seen it all. The enthusiasm and participation of a large and incredibly diverse group of Americans was impressive, and in many instances very moving. The quality of the plenary presentations was excellent and their formats were unique; they seemed captivating and accessible to all.

Tennessee made a significant contribution to the conference. Andrea Cooper participated in a panel on health disparities faced by people with disabilities. Her comments about problems obtaining health and related home services and the effects on full participation in employment were very insightful.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

## IMPROVING CARE COORDINATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DUAL DIAGNOSIS

Wednesday, June 7, 2006  
8:30 a.m.-4:15 p.m.  
Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Room 241

Conference Sponsors:  
Community Inclusion Project  
Mid-Tennessee Interdisciplinary Instruction in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities MIND  
in collaboration with Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities  
Tennessee Division of Mental Retardation Services

••PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED••  
but no cost to attend

Email bac@vanderbilt.edu  
Call 615 322-8185

Stephanie Newton is communications coordinator at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.



# DISABILITY SERVICES AND THE HISPANIC COMMUNITY FORUM by Claudia Avila-Lopez

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder's Disability Outreach Program connects the unserved and underserved Hispanic community in Nashville to disability resources, thanks to a partnership among the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Woodbine Community Organization. This project started in January 2005 and has helped over 100 families connect with services.

Pathfinder sponsored the *Importance of Communication* workshop, in March 2005. Over 40 professionals from the Hispanic community got together to learn about disability programs and effective ways to communicate with each other. Pathfinder recognized a great need to host other conferences related to disabilities, to help other professionals who are serving the Hispanic community get connected with agencies and resources. One of the needs was to have disability agencies meet to talk about their programs and, if they don't have programs, to inform them on how to start developing ones for Hispanic families who do not speak English.

On December 15, 2005, Pathfinder sponsored the *Disability Services and the Hispanic Community Forum*. More than 60 professionals gathered to learn about services available to families who do not speak English. There were morning and afternoon panels, followed by group discussions. The first panel consisted of representatives from the Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee, the Epilepsy Foundation, The Arc of Tennessee, the Down Syndrome Association of Middle

Tennessee, and the Autism Society of Middle Tennessee. STEP (Support Training for Exceptional Parents) and two school social workers were invited to the second panel to talk about educational rights in the public school system. The social workers from the Metropolitan Public School System explained what the school system provides to children with disabilities, how the process works and who to call for help. The STEP representative discussed how they train parents on IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings procedures, and the importance of being involved. She also talked about how to ask for services that their children need and how STEP can help them with any part of the process.

In the last part of the Forum, the entire group discussed what was needed in the community, and the challenges that everyone faces when trying to serve the Hispanic community. There was also an agency bazaar that included exhibits from disability agencies, where participants could network and gather information about each other's services.

According to the evaluations completed by the attendees, the forum was an enormous success! The Pathfinder staff was very excited and satisfied with the results of the Forum, and are hoping to host an event like this every year.

*Claudia Avila-Lopez is bi-lingual social worker with Tennessee Disability Pathfinder at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Family Outreach Center.*



AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES AT HISPANIC COMMUNITY FORUM.

CHECK US OUT ON THE WEB AT: [www.breakingground.org](http://www.breakingground.org)

# CHOICES FOR CARE RALLY AT THE CAPITOL

WAR MEMORIAL PLAZA  
State Capitol, Nashville, TN

April 5, 2006 • 1:00 pm CT

FREE PARKING AND LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED!

Program will include Dr. Bill Thomas, International Gerontologist and a special presentation of thousands of signed postcards to the Governor.

For more information or to learn how you can help with this event, contact Kathryn at AARP Tennessee (1-866-295-7274).

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

homeownership certainly supports that value. Probably more than anything else."

Mr. McCleary expressed an interest to buy his own place, and fortunately, the HOYO project was taking applications. This is not to say that his decision to join the ranks of homeowners was an easy, or quick one. In reality it took a couple of years, while Mr. McCleary was living in an apartment nearby the Mid-TN offices on Murfreesboro Road in Nashville.

"He really felt safe living in an apartment at the top of the hill," says Jill Chapman, Mid-TN's Support Team Leader, and Mr. McCleary's case manager. "He liked being able to walk down to the office and pop in when he wanted, or when he needed to know what was going on. He liked this neighborhood—he knew his landlady, the maintenance workers. He had lived there since 1999. He knew all the people at H.G. Hills and the Kroger. But then things in the neighborhood started changing, and he no longer felt comfortable walking down to the bustop or to the store."

So far, Mr. McCleary has been pleased with his new community that has been sprouting up around him. "I've got some fine neighbors," he says. "One planted some flowers in my yard before I moved in. And I thought, now she was nice!" His next door neighbor is Kathy Bledsoe—another Home of Your Own

recipient—who also is supported by the staff at Mid-TN.

Mr. McCleary understands that there was groundbreaking on his new home, in more ways than one. "What about other people who have disabilities?" he asks. "Do they have homes like this? I don't think so. I don't like group homes for our folks. Maybe they can get more homes opened up where they can live independently on their own. I'd like to see other people have things like this too."

With individuals like Ms. Hunt and Ms. Chapman rooting for them, projects like HOYO believing in its possibility, and agency staff and other community members willing to volunteer their time and energy, there will likely be more successful homebuyers with disabilities. "Our experience says that if somebody really wants to be a homeowner it can happen," says Ms. Hunt. "You just have to put your heads together. We've worked with families who are real committed to helping their sons or daughters become homeowners. We've talked to banks—whomever. Right now there are four more people we support who are saying, 'I think I'd like that.' When someone we support sees that happen for someone else, that someone begins to start dreaming about it."

For more information about the HOYO project, please contact Erin Kice at 615-321-5699, or by e-mail at [ekice@arcdc.org](mailto:ekice@arcdc.org). To learn more about Mid-TN, please call 615-367-0592.

# IMAGINE THE POSSABILTIES by Jawanda Barnett Mast

“When it was time for me to start to school, I was ready. But... my teachers weren’t ready for me!” Those words from featured speaker and presenter Karen Gaffney kicked off the Imagine the PossABILITIES mini-conference for self-advocates held November 5, 2005, at Germantown United Methodist Church. Hosted by the Down Syndrome Association of the Mid-South, a group of prestigious sponsors and donors, including the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Assisi Foundation of Memphis, and Baptist Memorial Health Care of Memphis, assisted in making the conference and dinner event a huge success.

Karen Gaffney, 28 of Portland, Oregon, is President of the Karen Gaffney Foundation and a graduate of St. Mary’s Academy, where she was fully included throughout her educational endeavors. She is now a community college graduate, and works as a teacher’s aide in a preschool. Karen was the keynote speaker and featured workshop presenter for the Conference and Dinner. She shared how early intervention, her parents’ support and their unwillingness to accept that Karen couldn’t do the same things as others, along with her own drive and “I can” attitude, helped her to overcome many fears and prejudices in schools and the community. Karen encouraged self-advocates to pursue their dreams and encouraged parents, educators, family members and the community to be open-minded and not place limits on what individuals with Down syndrome and other disabilities could accomplish.



JULIE OLSEN (LEFT) AND LORI SIEGAL

Throughout the afternoon, 25 self-advocates participated in a variety of workshops centered on the topics of looking your best, health and fitness. The evening event was a community dinner with 260 participants from many walks of life, and featured self-advocates Kenny Thielemier, Jack Harmeier, Ann Marie Morgret, and the Company D Dance Troupe.

It was a proud evening for the Down Syndrome Association of the Mid-South. This was the first event of this type to be held in the Mid-South, and it didn’t just happen. A committee headed by Julie Olsen spent nine months planning and working on the conference. The committee also consisted of a self-advocate, Lori Siegal, and parents of individuals with Down syndrome. The conference also enlisted the assistance of Jonathan Mast—father of 6-year-old Rachel, who has Down syndrome—to serve as the

evening’s master of ceremonies. Jonathan is a communications professional and has extensive experience in public speaking. He worked closely with the self-advocates to help them feel confident and prepared for the evening. Another reason for the event’s success was the volunteer training conducted by Martine Hobson. Martine is the mother of Lori, age 20, who is a graduate of the Tennessee Council on Development Disabilities’ Youth Leadership Forum.

Participants gave rave reviews and have requested that this become a regular event for the Mid-South Community. Based on the feedback from the conference, it is evident that our community is eager to hear and interact with self-advocate speakers and speakers with expertise in many different areas of developmental disabilities.



KAREN GAFFNEY (LEFT) AND JAWANDA BARNETT MAST

Personally, I was thrilled to be a part of this committee and this event. My primary responsibilities were sponsorships and public relations. I met Karen Gaffney four years ago, when I heard her speak at a national meeting. Karen is one of the key reasons I feel so strongly about full-inclusion for my own daughter, Rachel, in school and the community. Karen and her parents impressed upon me the importance of individuals with Down syndrome hearing the same things other students and citizens hear and learning to work together side by side in the real world. It was a turning point in my journey.

I believe that it is not just our businesses, educators and communities who have low-expectations for individuals with disabilities, but parents and other family members, as well. Family members must be the first ones to embrace the “I Can!” and “I deserve to be treated like all other Americans” attitudes. And I believe that Karen Gaffney and the Imagine event will be a catalyst for a new way of thinking in the Mid-South!

Jawanda Barnett Mast is president of the Down Syndrome Association of the Mid-South, Imagine the PossABILITIES Committee Member and 2005 Partners in Policymaking™ graduate.



# STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL SELECTS NEW DIRECTOR By Ned Andrew Solomon

Earlier this year, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) selected Jason McAlexander to be the office’s new director. The SILC—federally funded through Vocational Rehabilitation—is charged with supporting Tennessee’s Centers for Independent Living in carrying out their four core services: advocacy, independent living skills training, information and referral, and peer support.

Beyond that support, the SILC’s main purpose is to help the CILs promote the independent living movement. “We make a three-year State plan for independent living, which helps decide which direction we’re going, and how we’re going to get there,” explains Mr. McAlexander. “All the CILs are to follow that plan, and we help them do that. The State plan is our main driving tool. We have kind of an overseer capacity for each CIL handling the aspects of the State plan that they are responsible for.”

The separate CIL directors do contribute to the development of the State plan. They gather on a regular basis to brainstorm what’s working or not in their Centers and in their communities, and to give each other support. Each CIL is a separate entity, with its own board of directors.

The SILC has a board too, made up of 12 governor-appointed members, several Representatives from agencies—including Wanda Willis, the executive director of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities—organizations that serve persons with disabilities, professionals from the community, and persons with disabilities not affiliated with any of these other entities.

Mr. McAlexander is energized about taking over the reins, and believes his appointment was “a perfect fit.” He is 32, with two master’s degrees: one in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University Of South Alabama, the other in Organizational Psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology. “So now I have a sense of how an organization should run effectively and efficiently,” says Mr. McAlexander. “Here I can work with the disabled community and also work on the organizational level to make an effective and efficient non-profit work so we can do some real good. I’d also like us to be a stronger and more visible force in the community—have more of a presence. So hopefully you’ll see me around on this board and that board. I’m excited and appreciate the networking and collaboration I’ve been seeing amongst different non-profit organizations in the disability field.”



PHOTO CREDIT: NED ANDREW SOLOMON

Mr. McAlexander is a wheelchair-user himself, the result of a diving accident in June of 1995 while a junior in Psychology at West Virginia University. After the accident, Mr. McAlexander went for a three-month rehabilitative stay at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta. “They told me not to go to the couch; they told me to keep moving,” says Mr. McAlexander. “So I was enrolled in Charlotte at UNCC before I was even discharged from the rehab hospital. It kept me going and my mind going and back toward independent living—which was my goal.”

Recently, to better provide services across the entire state, two new CILs were created: one in Northeast, the other in Northern Middle, Tennessee. Those are in addition to the five existing Centers in Memphis, Jackson, Nashville, Chattanooga and Knoxville. “We’re trying to target unserved or underserved areas,” explains Mr. McAlexander. “We’re proud of getting those started, and that there are people out there who want to do the same things we do, and have the motivation and organizational skills to get it done. The new Centers will also help spread awareness of our work. The more people and organizations in the disability field that can get out there and be heard in an organized, smart way makes us look better to the general public, and creates a bigger squeaky wheel to get the grease.”



# MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY INCLUSION WITHOUT APOLOGIES

by Kathryn Huffman

We live in a community that offers many options for all children for recreation and sports. When my son, Jordan was five, I noticed that he had a great interest in playing baseball. He had started playing with a T-stand and loved banging a ball with any kind of bat or stick. Our community has a recreation program, CYAA, Collierville Youth Athletic Association, that offers T-ball for young beginners of the great game of baseball. I started asking other parents about T-ball and noticed many of his classmates were playing. I found out that all I had to do was sign up at the Community Center.

So Jordan and I drove on over to sign up. The form was for basic information, with a place asking if your child had any health or other concerns. I wrote in that Jordan has Down syndrome. I thought in the back of my mind, “I wonder if I’ll get a call about this and if it’s going to be an issue.” Then I thought, “Wait a minute. Jordan has the same needs, feelings and desires as any other kid his age. So what am I worrying about?”

A few weeks later, I did receive a call from the coach with general information about practices and games, etc. I did ask him if he was aware that Jordan has Down syndrome and he replied that he wasn’t aware. I talked to him about Jordan’s strengths and love for the game of baseball and I told him that we were excited about being part of the team.

I must admit that I was stressed at the first game. I was worried about how the coaches would react to Jordan. Would the kids be kind? Would the parents ask me, “How come he isn’t doing a ‘special’ program?” I really had to stop myself and remember that I’d just have to overcome this way of thinking if this was going to work.

The game went well and Jordan fit right in with the other kids. The parents cheered Jordan on when he came up to bat. The coaches were great and offered all the assistance that Jordan needed. But most importantly, Jordan had such a great time and was beaming from self-esteem, joy and the satisfaction of belonging to a team. Many of the kids at the ballpark knew him from school or church.

Jordan has played baseball for CYAA for five years. He has scored many runs and is becoming quite a great hitter. He is ten years old now and also has played in the CYAA soccer and basketball programs. Each year I sign him up, I hope for others to follow me.

A couple of years ago, a friend who is a Scout leader urged me to sign Jordan up for Cub Scouts. I asked Jordan if he was interested and he was, and couldn’t wait to get his uniform. He has won ribbons in the pinewood derby, earned badges, and we even attended the Weebelos Encampment this past Fall. Cub Scouts is a great way for anyone with a disability to socialize and have many activities. Jordan’s Scout leader is encouraging and supportive and he has many dads who help him at meetings and outings.



I have had many parents of children with disabilities and parents of children without disabilities ask me how I “got” Jordan into these programs. I always tell them the same thing, “Why wouldn’t they let him in?” I feel like life is a challenge for everyone, in sports, social events, and clubs, with their own range of abilities. How will anyone learn acceptance and inclusion if

you don’t just show up or try and make a way for your child to experience all the things you want for them?

I want people to be exposed to Jordan now



while he is young and vice versa, so he will be equipped in life to handle circumstances that will present themselves. People learn more about disabilities and acceptance by personally being involved in that person’s life. Jordan is a kid first, not defined by his limitations or disability. He has the right to experience all that life has to offer.

Jordan attends Sunday school and a Wednesday night program at our church, St. Patrick Presbyterian. He has performed each year singing with all the kids, dressed in costume in the Christmas program. He memorized a line and had a part to say into the microphone, which he really enjoyed. Most of the kids don’t even know he has a disability because, to them, Jordan is just one of the kids.

Jordan enjoys putting on his uniform and being part of a team. He loves going to the field on game day and can’t wait for the snacks after the game. He was so excited about his new Cub Scouts uniform, he has worn it to school a few times. He couldn’t wait to go camping with the Scouts and sleep in a tent. He attends a great horseback riding camp in the Summer that he looks forward to each year. He is a regular during the Summer at the local YMCA pool, where he also took swimming lessons in the Fall in a group setting.

Being a graduate of the Partners in Policymaking™ program has made me more aware of how to forge on and help others make a difference. I learned many tools on how to navigate community inclusion and how to be a better advocate for Jordan. I got to meet many other parents and draw from their experiences and share my experiences with them.

I would love to see more kids with disabilities try more sports and activities. I think that it can be done for all levels of abilities. You have to be creative, energetic, cooperative, and open-minded for it to happen. I won’t tell you that it’s been easy. I am the practice coach for Jordan and I’m there at every game making sure all goes well. I get unnerved sometimes, but so do the rest of the parents! Parents and kids I have met through the years have learned many things about Down syndrome, and that kind of personal awareness is important to pass on.

I have recently been asked to be an advisor for the Town’s Park and Recreation Department of Special Services. I joined a group of other advisors to discuss options that are available and getting more kids included in sports programs in the community. I hope that the community will continue to evolve in moving away from special segregated programs, to more inclusive recreation for everyone, those with and without disabilities.

## NEWS FROM PATHFINDER

By Melissa Fortson

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder has phone, Web, and print resources in English and Spanish to connect the Tennessee disability community with service providers. Referral services, free of cost, are provided to persons with disabilities, family members, service providers, and advocates. Pathfinder is a joint project of the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development.

### THE PATHFINDER CAMP CONNECTION

There are many summer camp opportunities for children and young adults with all abilities. Pathfinder collects and provides information about specialty or disability programs. To access this information, go to the Pathfinder Web site at <http://www.familypathfinder.org> and click on “Recreation and Summer Camps.” For more information, or to add your summer recreational program, contact Pathfinder.

### PATHFINDER DISABILITY CALENDAR

Pathfinder maintains the Pathfinder Disability Calendar, an Internet calendar of trainings, conferences, meetings, and other disability-related events. Organizations post events to this interactive calendar, the most comprehensive listing of Tennessee disability events. To access the calendar, go to the Pathfinder Web site at <http://www.familypathfinder.org> and click on “Pathfinder Disability Calendar.” For more information, or to request an access code that will allow your organization to post events, contact Pathfinder.

### STAY CONNECTED WITH PATHFINDER

Pathfinder recently began publishing The Pathfinder, an e-newsletter containing information about program activities and other disability-related resources in Tennessee. Past issues of the publication are archived on the Pathfinder Web site (under Pathfinder Features, click on “The Pathfinder: News from Tennessee Disability Pathfinder.” To receive future news from Tennessee Disability Pathfinder via e-mail, please contact us at [tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu).

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder  
(615) 322-8529 (Nashville area)  
(800) 640-4636 (toll-free, English & Español)  
(800) 273-9595 (TTY)  
[www.familypathfinder.org](http://www.familypathfinder.org)  
[tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tnpathfinder@vanderbilt.edu)

*Melissa Fortson is disability resource specialist with Tennessee Disability Pathfinder at the Vanderbilt Kennedy Family Outreach Center.*

## 2004-2005 DIRECTORY DISCOUNT: NOW ONLY \$15

*2004-2005 Tennessee Disability Services & Supports Directory*, published by the Tennessee Disability Pathfinder Office, is a source of information regarding state and local programs and services. The newest edi-

tion is available by geographic region (East, Middle, and West Tennessee). Order forms are available online at <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/devents/order.html>



# TENNESSEE SPOTLIGHT

## EAST REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT CONSORTIUM HONORS REPRESENTATIVE HARRY BROOKS

On December 8, 2005, the East Tennessee Employment Consortium (EREC) met in Knoxville to celebrate employment of individuals with disabilities in East Tennessee. The Tennessee Employment Consortium (TEC) and the EREC were initiated in 2001 based on an agreement between the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS) and the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities. The initial goal of the Consortium was to have 25% of the people served by DMRS in the community in inclusive employment. (It was estimated that approximately 16% of the individuals served were in employment when the Consortium began.)

In the past three years, due to the efforts of the Consortium and the regional consortia, that number has risen to almost 24% statewide, and 29% in East Tennessee. With the national average estimated to be between 20% and 25%, Tennessee has reached that average, and East Tennessee has surpassed it.

As TEC and EREC have worked on increasing the employment rate of people served by DMRS, they have found allies and champions. The meeting was a chance to honor one such champion. Representative **Harry Brooks** (Knoxville) was presented an award for his legislation providing for State tax credits for employers who hire individuals with disabilities. Representative Brooks expressed his gratitude for and pride in receiving his award.

## TWO YOUTH ASKED TO JOIN MAYOR’S ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**Will Ferrell** and **Skye Solomon**, two students at Hillsboro High School in Nashville, were asked to join the Mayor’s Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities. Once a month, both students will take a short time out of their studies to participate in this Committee’s conference calls. Skye Solomon is the 2005 winner of the Committee’s Family Award, and the daughter of Council staff member Ned Andrew Solomon and Partners graduate Amy Harris Solomon. Will Ferrell is the 2004 winner of the Trey Pointer Young Citizen Award, the brother of Council intern, Ashley Ferrell, the son of Partners graduate Candie Ferrell, and a graduate of the Tennessee Youth Leadership Forum.

## NATIONAL “DEAF VIEW/IMAGE ART” EXHIBIT RUNS THROUGH APRIL 30TH

Nashville is the exclusive host of the Second Annual National Juried De’VIA (Deaf View/Image Art) Exhibit, considered to be the only one of its kind in the United States. De’VIA will highlight two and three-dimensional art from 16 professional and ama-

teur adult artists representing nine states as well as artwork and photography from 19 youth from Tennessee. Art from the De’VIA 2006 Youth Competition was selected by a panel of judges from more than 50 pieces submitted by youngsters from across Tennessee.

De’VIA targets artists nationwide from within the Deaf community consisting of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have a strong connection with the Deaf Community such as family members or interpreters. Tennessee artists **Gina Helms** from Ashland City and **Ken McBroom** from Seymour are among the De’VIA 2006 artists.

The exhibit by adult artists is displayed at The Vanderbilt University Hospital Mezzanine Gallery. The youth art exhibit is at the Monroe Carrell, Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt. Both De’VIA events are free and open to the public.

## VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER DIRECTOR APPOINTED TO NATIONAL ADVISORYMENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Mike Leavitt has appointed Vanderbilt Kennedy Center Director **Pat Levitt** to the National Advisory Mental Health Council.

The council advises the HHS secretary, the assistant secretary for health, the director of the National Institutes of Health and the director of the National Institute of Mental Health on "all policies and activities relating to the conduct and support of mental health research, research training and other programs of the (National Institute of Mental Health)."

The council has 18 members and five non-voting ex-officio members. Dr.Levitt will serve a four-year term.

**Dr. LaRhea Sanford**, consulting special education teacher for Metro Nashville Public Schools Vision Program, has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tennessee Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired. Dr. LaRhea has worked with visually impaired students since 1969 and serves as adjunct professor in the Department of Special Education at Peabody College of Education and Human Development, Vanderbilt University.

**Nancy Diehl**, of Greeneville, was selected as a fellow to work in Washington, DC, for a full year, to actively participate in public policy development through work as staff of a member of Congress, congressional committee, or federal agency. Ms. Diehl has taken a one-year sabbatical from her position as executive

director of Tennessee’s Parent Training and Information Center (PTI); Support and Training for Exceptional Parents, Inc. (STEP). Ms. Diehl has four children, two of whom experience disabilities. Her oldest son is challenged with autism and lives in Johnson City as a homeowner, good neighbor, and a member of his community.

Kennedy Fellows receive first-hand knowledge and experience in the development of public policy and the opportunity to hone their skills in challenging new environments. Former Kennedy fellows have gone on to pursue careers as leaders in university centers, non-profit advocacy and service organizations, Congressional staff and Federal political appointments.

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Rick Rader, from Chattanooga, raised important issues of how federal designation of disabilities as an "underserved population" could enhance the delivery of quality health services for people with disabilities by attracting health care providers into the field. The Tennessee State Priorities, developed from many Tennesseans' input, can serve as a blueprint for future efforts to attain full participation in Tennessee.

The AFP exceeded my expectations. The challenges are now with us to maintain the momentum created by the gathering. In Tennessee, I think attention to the State Priorities is a great way to start.

-FRED PALMER, M.D., DIRECTOR, BOLING CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, MEMPHIS

The AFP conference and the entire process leading up to it was mind blowing. To see multiple stakeholders from around the nation come together at one location to discuss the many issues that concern us all in one way or another was empowering to see. Our Tennessee State Team was one of the most prepared states at the conference and it was very obvious with our presence and participation. I will continue to support the AFP and its mission and vision to address the many concerns within our industry.

-EARL FOXX, DIRECTOR, DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION OF TENNESSEE, NASHVILLE

The Alliance meeting was a unique, perhaps life-changing experience for me. Although none of the ideas and little of the information were "new," what I experienced was a renewed belief in the power of self-advocacy and a clear vision of a goal for the future, a future in which peo-

ple with disabilities are included in our communities without fanfare but as a matter of course. I left thinking that the experiences that we had shared must be available to others. In Tennessee, through the MegaConference we have the opportunity to make this possible. I have a vision of a conference room full of self-advocates articulating their dreams, their frustrations, and their insights to guide us to make change happen. Currently, Tennessee is #50 in the choices it offers people with disabilities who need significant supports. What I learned at the Alliance is that inclusive communities are possible. We cannot consider them as simply one option.

-CAROL GREENWALD, ADVOCATE AND PARENT OF A SON WHO HAS A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY, MEMPHIS

Dr. Debra Martin Luecking and I arrived in Washington, D.C., to begin our journey in participating in the largest ever national summit in the disability field in the United States. Like hundreds of self-advocates at the summit, we came to advocate that people with developmental disabilities deserve every opportunity to fully participate in their communities and in the workplace.

We listened as the leaders of our society taught us how the disability field can come together to shape national public policy agendas into reality for all people with disabilities...taught us the importance of leadership, the need for community membership and self-determination, and how to enhance the quality of supports and services for all people with disabilities. On the very last day, all participants, including hundreds of self-advocates, gathered for an interactive town hall meeting to vote on what should be included in our national

platform for people with disabilities. The great thing about it was that we saw our results on the screens within 30 seconds! The town hall was comparable to a political party convention, deciding what our party platform is going to be for the next 10 years! Self-advocates participated by voting and clapped when the voting results registered their beliefs on the screen. It was so heartwarming to see everyone come together and agree on major policy agendas for people with disabilities.

"It is up to all of us, including self-advocates, family members, researchers, service providers, and direct support professionals in Tennessee, to press forward in advocating for full participation for all people with disabilities in their respective communities. As Martin Luther King stated 42 years ago on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., '...We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back.' I ask everyone within the disability community in Tennessee to pledge that we will march together to new a century where full participation for people with disabilities will become a reality."

- JESSICA STULTS, COMMUNITY SUPPORT FACILITATOR, UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE CENTER ON DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT, KNOXVILLE

The fact that Washington, DC, was terribly unprepared for the onslaught of so many people with disabilities was encouraging because it was an unprecedented combination of persons in the disability field.

-ANDREA COOPER, ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER, DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES, TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, NASHVILLE





MEMBERSHIP AND STAFF

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